

Appl. No. 10/609,135
Amdt. dated February 9, 2006
Reply to Office Action of November 30, 2005

PATENT

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method of cleaning and preparing produce, the method comprising:

transporting the produce on a conveyor;

rotating the produce substantially continuously during the transporting; and

applying steam to an outer surface of the produce on the conveyor.

2. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the steam is applied at a pressure in a range of 20-100.

3. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 1 further comprising washing the produce on the conveyor.

4. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein the washing is done prior to applying steam.

5. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein the steam is applied at a pressure in a range of 20-90 psi.

6. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein the washing is done after applying steam.

7. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 6 wherein the steam is applied at a pressure in a range of 20-100 psi.

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8. (Withdrawn) A system for cleaning and preparing produce, the system comprising:

a housing comprising an entrance and an exit;

a rotating conveyor extending from at least the entrance to the exit; and

a steam pasteurization section within the housing, the steam pasteurization station comprising a plurality of steam jets arranged around the rotating conveyor, wherein some of the steam jets are arranged off-center with respect to the rotating conveyor.

9. (Withdrawn) A system in accordance with claim 8 further comprising a wash station with the housing.

10. (Withdrawn) A system in accordance with claim 9 wherein the wash station is located prior to the pasteurization station.

11. (Withdrawn) A system in accordance with claim 10 wherein the wash station is located after the pasteurization station.

12. (Withdrawn) A system in accordance with claim 8 wherein the rotating conveyor comprises a series of transverse rollers coupled at their ends to a pair of roller chains, and a rack and pinion drive coupled to the rollers.

13. (Withdrawn) A system in accordance with claim 8 further comprising lane dividers extending longitudinally along the rotating conveyor a direction of travel of the conveyor.